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ABSTRACT

This document is devoted to articles on the Open Corridor program, especially as it concerns parent participation. The first piece, "Letter from the Director," discusses trends in the parent participation aspect of the program, including problems for parents and teachers. It notes that a major problem for parents in the program has been their concern for a specific classroom and a specific teacher rather than the development of new reorganizations or generalized considerations or remolding school structure. "A Principal's View" and "Parents in the Corridor" are two first-hand reactions to the Open Corridor program. "Parents Speak Out" presents excerpts from interviews with two parents on their reactions to the program. "Movement as Language" is an account by a member of the staff of the Workshop Center for Open Education, based on her experiences with teachers in the Open Corridor program. The article stresses showing teachers the possible uses of movement with children to extend learning activities. (JA)

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Do you not see how everything that happens keeps on being a beginning?

Rainer Maria Rilke.

RUTH DROPKIN

THIS ISSUE: PARENT PARTICIPATION--A DIFFERENT STANCE/ A PRINCIPAL'S VIEW/ PARENTS IN THE CORRIDOR/ TWO INTERVIEWS/ MOVEMENT AS LANGUAGE/ INDEX TO VOLUMES 1 and 2

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About this publication

Notes from Workshop Center for Open Education is published four times during the school year. Its purpose is to provide a periodic report on the changes that were begun under the direction of the City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors, and that school people, many of whom use the Workshop Center, are making in New York City public schools.

Our account of these changes is necessarily also an account of the obstacles to change, of those that have yielded to new uses and of those that still confront us. Our focus remains on the ways schools can support the continuous, active, and individual learning of children.

Notes will serve as a forum for discussion of ideas and developments in curriculum and classroom organization that Workshop Center staff and participants find useful to share with teachers and administrators in open classrooms.

THE WORKSHOP CENTER FOR OPEN EDUCATION is a free facility for teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents who are interested and involved in open education in the New York City area. Its work is supported by a grant from the U.S. Office of Education under Title III of the ESEA of 1965, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and City College.

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Volume 2, Number 4

Letter from the director

With this issue of NOTES I would like to begin the attempt to spell out some implications in our approach to parent participation--implications that up to now have not been generally recognized. Parent participation has always been a basic component of our program for reorganization of the school in ways that would better support children's learning. Reviewing what we have done up to now, I am forced to conclude that our present modes of including parents are only a beginning.

From the outset of our work, we understood that parent participation in the task of school reorganization was necessary; we welcomed the overtures and offerings of support from parents. In fact, the descriptions published here of the ways in which parents have been included and have participated show us how far we have come from the "parents visiting day" of the old closed formal structures. They show us how much participation has developed, how "open" the door has been. Nevertheless, participation of parents with teachers in building the Open Corridor program has not entirely cut into how much each group feels removed from the other, with the resulting difference in stance of each group vis-a-vis the other. Such a difference is perhaps inherent in the structure of their settings and relationships. But the fact is that parents have often been involved in developing school programs in quite narrow ways.

If we are to make progress in this area, we need now to better understand those elements in the teacher-parent relationship that produce in teachers a stance of apartness and in parents a stance of the "outsider."

DECISION FOR CHANGE

The decision to move towards Open Corridors, to reorganize classrooms, was consciously made, and done so by all the participants in the classroom process, including the parents. For parents, this decision took place in a climate of failure for many of their children and in a climate, politically created, that held out the bright promise of their assuming a more active responsibility for what was going on in the school. It was based, most importantly, on taking a new look at how children learn and how the classroom processes support this learning. For parents this involved reexamining many of the things they already knew, in some sense, about their children: that each of their children is different; that they learn in various ways--through watching the doings of the different generations, listening, and trying out what works, as well through being told what to do and from the response and interaction that follow their efforts.

Parents had long assumed that school could be organized no differently from the way they themselves had experienced it. But the emergence of new political opportunities for influencing the school structure and the new programs for school reorganization, such as the Open Corridor, encouraged critical examination of this assumption. Parents now asked how schools were supporting their children's learning. For those parents who elected to join in the new reorganizations, their participation in the Open Corridor development spanned a continuum from being initiators to being at least consenting participants.

Parent initiative, persistence, political power, and creativity have been essential elements in easing the school's rigid institutional setting so as to enable the changed relationships in open corridors to develop. Only with such participation could the basis of class formation be changed to heterogeneous groupings, could there be departures from the prescribed syllabus, and changes in school relationships, in the use of yard, corridor, and lunchroom, and in budget allocations for classroom materials. Indeed the program's existence has depended and still depends

in large measure on such involvement, which has set the pattern not only for inclusion of parents but for working in the open, thereby spelling an end to the mystique of the closed classroom.

PROBLEMS FOR PARENTS

In the course of our work, classrooms were opened to the parents for many reasons. To begin with, parents were acknowledged to have a special role over and above other participants. Parents were acknowledged to "belong" and were inevitably included because, quite simply, children "came" with parents. In addition, it was *useful* to the teacher to encourage parents' participation. The richness and variety of parents' experiences and skills increased the pool of curricular resources from which the teacher could draw; parents also provided extra help, so that the teachers could arrange for closer individual and small-group relationships.

Implicit in our moves towards more informal relationships and a better match between a child's way of learning and school structure, of course, was some blurring of the line between home and school, some building of continuities and connections. Nevertheless, the "ground" of parent participation and inclusion remained the school, and the school is the domain of the professional--the teacher. This fact of life certainly accounts for part of the difficulty parents have, their sense of being outsiders as they look to the teacher for things to do or not do. It also accounts for their concomitant view that the teacher is an employee whose performance in the classroom is fair game for criticism.

But the participating parent, coming and going in and out of the classroom, seeing this piece of practice or that piece of an activity or of an exchange between children or between children and teacher, contributes only in a partial and restricted sense--in time as well as content. His or her understanding of what is going on is inevitably colored by the same partial and restricted nature of his or her participation. In addition to these limitations there is the fact of the particularity of the parent-child relationship. A parent's con-

cern is for a specific classroom, and a specific teacher, as supports for his child--a concern that makes it difficult for him to help with the development of the new reorganizations or to relate to any generalized consideration of remolding school structures. In other words, though parents have agreed to work with teachers in pursuit of a common commitment--remolding the school in ways that could better support and match a child's development--it is hard for them to trust that teachers take this commitment as seriously as they do. More critically, their participation in the decision to remold the classroom hasn't necessarily meant support for the individually different ways of teachers' development. Many parents, it has become apparent, have the idea that one open classroom will be like another, so that in general, it has been difficult for them to understand that teachers might implement their changes using different styles. Furthermore, some parents find it hard to accept an individual teacher's slow growth towards greater openness. As they watch a teacher working, parents are of course concerned, on behalf of their own child, about the ineptness of a particular teacher's groping or the sloppiness of her first efforts. The teachers, however, need parents' support to bulwark *their* decision to risk a *public* "open" process for their first steps in this new way of working.

Actually the issue of parent pressure cannot be summed up entirely as one of parents' learning to understand the *time* factor in teacher development. It must be remembered that the teachers are not entirely free to change. Such constraints in the public school system as testing and the prescribed syllabus still remain. Sometimes the parents' response to this situation was to become seriously anxious about the possibility that teachers would not meet the so-called standards imposed by the school system, and to demand that teachers meet these. Thus it was that the parent did not always look in the classroom for those elements of the informal setting that supported his child at home and that the parent *wanted* to be continuous for him; he did not always look for Open Corridor *development*. Rather, giving in to his anxieties, the parent looked at the classroom as "classroom" and judged it according to traditional standards.

Sometimes he even pressured it back to the old modes that he himself had wished discarded because they did not support a child's development.

And just as we have described the restriction of the parent's point of view as regards the classroom process, so also must we note that the teacher has a restricted view of the process. The teacher's angle of vision results from the time-limited, cross-sectional context of her relationship to the children, which is in sharp contrast to the parents' longitudinal relationship. From her classroom position the teacher looks at the parent with a restricted view--through the child. The focus in the teacher-parent interaction is on the child's function in the class, with the teacher judging the parent on the basis of whether or not he has produced a child amenable to what the teacher can offer.

PROBLEMS FOR TEACHERS

We are beginning to see how the parents fuller participation in the process of remolding the school has been hindered. The teachers have included parents, yes, but not as essential to the working process of the classroom. Nor did they include them in many of the decisions past the first major one of joining the Open Corridor. In other words, the risk of complete openness was not taken.

Lesser decisions on implementation or on curricular development (even though these were extremely relevant to a particular parent because his own child was involved) were often those that teachers grappled with in private, voicing their doubts and difficulties to each other and presenting for the parent's view at any particular time only the *product* of these grapplings. If parents asked a question, it was assumed very often that they were challenging the basic decision about goals, when in fact they were asking a question about the individual teacher's implementation. Kept "external" in these ways, parents assumed what we can only call an "external" stance as they examined and assessed a teacher's implementation rather than adapting a stance of partnership.

But more is involved in boxing off parents'

participation, we're discovering, than these easily understandable differences of stance. We have insufficiently examined what is implied by our first commitment to remold the school so that it is in continuity with what had supported a child's earlier active learning patterns. It is this omission, we see, that is the root of "*externalism*," for it is this that leaves the parent removed from the rationale for change. In developing our rationale we concentrated on early learning patterns, without adequately analyzing the source of these patterns in the educative possibilities of the home. We did not appreciate sufficiently that the informal educative process with which we wanted to be continuous had its locus in the home, in the parents, and in the intimate, informal, intergenerational structures wherein children gain not only support that *over time* is irreversible and independent of achievement, but also the kind of acceptance of place that is inherent in an unquestioned relationship. Nor did we analyze in what ways these structures had educative force. After all, informal structures are hard to see--home and other informal settings have many functions, and a child is "taken along," "included" within their context. His learning is often an incidental, though amazing, aspect of these functions. We, however, did not study deeply enough the responses, the complexities, the certainties, the happenstances, and aspects of the intimacy and privacy that compose the possibilities in the learning milieu of the home.

Nor indeed have we analyzed the differences in the essential elements of the school context. While the learning milieu of the home may be incidental to other functions, school focus is on what a child needs to learn from others and from things. School focus, furthermore, is on a child's deficits. Even when it is moving towards informality, school can be recognized as a setting where experiences are planned, as well as confirmed and responded to. Indeed, *in order* to respond and to confirm, we in school find ways to "hold" for reflection, analysis, and sharing some of what may have impinged fleetingly on a child in the informal home context or as he passed through the neighborhood, coming and going to school. We try to "uncover" an experience, to expose its facets, trusting that one or another of these may impinge on some child, enabling him to make connections. In school we

try to plan for increased contact and interchange with peers and with new adults who accept the responsibility of being responsive and intelligent about their interaction with children. We try to fulfill our commitment to continuity by finding ways to support the growth of individually different children. The support we give children may well vary in its characteristics from the support given in different ways in the home. But we have not examined as necessary for our development the continuities that exist between our context and the informal home context. How and to what extent can the school ways be connected with home ways, made continuous with home ways and finally, become ways that have learned much from home ways? These in fact are the questions we must answer to fulfill our commitment to continuity.

A DIFFERENT STANCE

These points are important not only because of our first commitment to continuity with the prior-to-school informal setting but because we are becoming more and more aware of the importance of informal social settings outside of schools in the structuring and restructuring of a child's development over time. When we can accept the informal context as the major support for a child's shaping and reshaping of his self-definition and identity over time--supporting him in finding different forms of coping at different times, supporting the process by which he comes to know his self--then we will assume a different stance to parents. This stance will have nothing to do with including them in *our* process, nor with "teaching" them, but with constantly examining *with* them the interrelationship between the informal and formal context that allow us to produce continuities between them. In order to share with a child in school, as does the home, the understandings that failure at any one moment is not final, that it is a long life, and that there are many patterns of coping, we will have to include in such study the many patterns of coping and function that are found in the informal, family, and societal settings. We will also have to study the continuities in a child's life: of setting, of prized possessions, of relationships, of language, of the whole context of culture, if we are to better understand how to further extend and develop our work.

Our inclusion of parents, therefore, will become many-sided, not limited to their paid roles as paraprofessionals or to their support of our changes in the schools. For example, we are now asking parents to help us with accounts of their own childhood memories in order to build into the classroom the cultural richnesses of a child's background. We will ask parents how they deal with the problem of providing for their individually different children and how their parents responded to *their* essential differences. We will listen for clues we can apply to our own work.

In our search for continuity with the informal context of the child's earlier learning milieu we may have understood the informal context of the early language acquisition process, but we did not understand the real patterns of the continuities in a child's life. To build connections with these continuities we need parents not only as partners in the school process but as partners in understanding the cross-overs of functions and milieu that are at present missing in schools. What becomes clear is that even to raise the question about *including* parents is to mistake the issue, because the informal educative process is one that is inherent in the parent-child, family-child relationship, in the informal association of the ordinary life that exists outside school. The anomaly lay in the fact that parents had been excluded from the educative process, not that parents should be included in this process.

Lillian Weber

A principal's view

Sid Morrison

Since becoming principal of P.S. 84 in November 1969, the creation of a sense of community to replace the impersonal, often deadening, institutional atmosphere that characterizes so many public schools has been one of my major goals. I have always believed that schools are community centers, bringing together the broadest strata of the population, and that they could, therefore, be extremely useful in serving the social and educational needs of their various constituencies. Instead, schools are frequently viewed as alien to the people's interests and as part of an establishment run by professionals for professionals; to many children they're jails and to many parents a formidable authority. P.S. 84 was no exception. Like most public schools it had its share of unhappy or low-achieving students, apathetic or frustrated teachers, and parents who felt totally disenf anchised. The years 1967 and 1968 highlighted this situation where morale was quite low and frustration of parents and teachers was high. But while these years saw great frustration and despair they also saw attempts at change. There was a growing community of interest on the part of many parents and teachers around two major themes: community control and informal education.

The attempts at informal education and the notion of community schools for our neighborhood probably began during the teacher strike of 1967 when a "Freedom School' was established by parents and teachers in a nearby community center. Many teachers were involved in setting up such schools throughout the city because, while they may have agreed with some of the strike issues, they repudiated the UFT leadership for its stand on the "disruptive child" and could not in good conscience support a UFT

picket line. So, rather than cross the lines, they set up informal schools with the help of parents. (Even prior to this strike, many teachers had supported school boycotts for integration and had taught in Freedom Schools around the city as well as in the South.) In these settings, teachers enjoyed the freedom to work informally, as they saw fit. For the first time many of them were exercising their professional responsibilities in determining curriculum and social behavior and were free to be creative without restriction from a bureaucratic administration. For the first time, too, they worked with parents, as equal partners, in making organizational and pedagogical decisions. My own experience during this time included being head teacher of the First Community Freedom School at the Grace Methodist Church, a school established and run by a group of West Side parents and teachers.

In 1968, as another teacher strike unfolded--this one directed against the movement for community control (a movement born of the Board of Education's failure to integrate schools)-- I joined with parents and teachers throughout our district in opening and operating all the regular schools. As mathematics coordinator of the district, I had come to know many of those same people through workshop training experiences. During this period much of my time was devoted to conducting workshops in informal math. P.S. 84 was a typical, if not model, community school at that time. With the cooperation of almost two-thirds the students, more than half the faculty, and many parents (maintaining the school around the clock), the school was a beehive for the duration of the strike. The significance of our involvement during that period was immeasurable. We learned that we could work harmoniously in an atmosphere of mutual respect and that that atmosphere was not only nurturing but perhaps basic to a better education for the children. It seemed clear also that in this atmosphere of informality--in the absence of traditional administration and its bureaucratic demands--the possibility for change could become a reality. Upon returning to "normalcy," both in 1967 and in 1968, a newly formed alliance of parents and teachers tried to consolidate what it had learned in the informal, community school setting and press for change. There were frequent meetings on organization and pedagogy, visits to other schools and talks with experts until, eventually, several significant innovations took hold in the school.

One of the innovations was an experimental, non-graded situation with two classes of ten- and eleven-year-olds. Staffed by three teachers who conceived the idea, and funded by a private foundation, this was one first attempts at organizing classes, curriculum, and teacher roles differently. The children had access to both rooms and the corridor and the teachers, emphasizing their own talents, worked as a team in support of the children's activities. Another innovation was the Open Corridor Reorganization, a broader-based effort which began with two kindergarrens and two first grades. Patterned after the British infant school, the Open Corridor program had been introduced in a Harlem school the year before and was sought out by parents and teachers at P.S. 84. It was the beginning of a comprehensive effort to support children's learning styles and to train teachers and paraprofessionals in techniques of open education. Both of these changes in school organization had their starts in 1968. Yet another fundamental change for the school was the establishment in 1969, of a committee of teachers, paraprofessionals and parents that selected the first community principal in the district. My aim, as that principal, was to support the innovations gained after years of struggle, to unite disparate groups that had developed as a result of the strikes, and to foster a sense of community which from experience I knew was possible.

The notion I have of community and my conception of informal education are intimately connected and have developed concurrently. There was a conscious effort to extend the original conception of the Open Corridor Reorganization by decentralizing the school into communities of four or five classes and locating each of these groups on a corridor or common hallway. Here, in a smaller, more intimate setting, teachers were encouraged to work together and develop a child-centered curriculum, making use of the child's family and immediate surroundings both as support and content for his learning. A corridor community (as these groups are now called) is a basic organizational unit which has proven to be a supportive environment both for the cognitive and affective growth of children and the professional growth of teachers. It develops from open education practices and changes in school organization designed to support those practices. The following is a description of those changes.

To begin, the decentralized unit seems to provide a better frame within which teachers can work more

cooperatively and freely than the large school setting. Teachers in a corridor community volunteer to be part of the Open Corridor Program and ask to work with specific people in the same community. They are continually encouraged to open their doors, to share and to link up with others. Each spring, when the school has to be reorganized for the following year I circulate questionnaires in which teachers are asked their preferences for the following year's teaching assignment. They are asked whether or not they would like to be part of the Open Corridor Program, what preparation they have made in that direction, if they would be willing to work with an advisor from the Open Corridor Advisory, what age children they would prefer and with which other teachers they would like to work. After collecting these questionnaires, I try to meet with everybody on staff before making the assignments permanent.

The next step in the reorganization process is to take the teacher preferences (three choices) and try to match them, in order of choice, with the number of classes (and supportive positions) needed. The class determination is based on: (1) the number of children, by grade, within the school (including some margin for expected population); (2) the school's budget allocation and, therefore, number of teaching positions (mainly determined by the contractual class size limit of thirty-two); (3) the projected organizational structure (i.e. decentralized communities, graded or non-graded classes, large or small registers, etc.), determined after consultation with staff, advisors, and parents, and keeping in mind teacher requests for working together. The distribution of teacher choices generally does not match the projected number of classes, so certain classes, not requested, have to be assigned. This is done after much consideration and negotiation. One of the non-class assignments, which has become crucial to the good functioning of a corridor community, is the cluster position which I will describe later on. Originally instituted solely to provide relief time for class teachers, the cluster has become a leadership position requiring more than merely an ability to fit into others' programs. The potential for training teachers and supporting and coordinating the efforts of others in the same community demands careful selection and matching.

Finally, in this process, classes must be situated and communities formed, reformed, or left as they

are, depending on their stages of development. For example, there is currently an "infant school" community (ages five through seven) which will undoubtedly stay intact next year. It contains six classes, three bilingual in Spanish and three "regular." (We try to form all our classes heterogeneously according to ethnicity and achievement and within that frame, an ethnic balance is sought which reflects the population of the school--42 percent Hispanic, 23 percent black and 35 percent "other." Bilingual classes, however, may be fifty percent or more Hispanic. In addition, their teachers are bilingual; they conduct their classes in both languages and their curricular focus is on Hispanic culture.) The "regular" component of the community is composed of a kindergarten and two non-graded groups of sixes and sevens. These classes are matched with bilingual counterparts and all the classes are continguous and alternating ("regular," bilingual, "regular," etc.). It has taken several years for this community to develop, having grown from four to six classes and from all "regular" classes to an integrated setting. Other corridors, in transitional stages, may change teachers, the positions of classes, the age range or structure of classes (i.e. from graded to non-graded). The building offers five corridor spaces within which communities can easily be formed but there is one section of the building where ten rooms, an office and three toilets open onto the same hallway. The heavy traffic and relatively large number of people in this space make it much less conducive to the intimacy afforded by a four or five room enclosed space. Consequently, there continues to be much shifting and experimenting with class and teacher relationships. In any event, after assignments and changes have been made, a typical corridor community will be composed of the classroom teachers, a cluster teacher (sometimes called a "corridor teacher"), paraprofessionals, and four or five classes of children spanning three or four years in age. It will be located on a corridor, bound on both sides by exit doors, with the classrooms opening onto it. The corridor space, used by all the children at one time or another, acts as both a link between classes and an extension of each of each of them.

Another important support for corridor communities is the changed use of cluster teachers. The cluster position was first introduced in schools to provide coverage for classroom teachers who, when relieved, were able to use that time for some kind of professional activity (e.g., preparation of materials). The most popular use of cluster person-

nel was (and still is in most schools) as "specialty" people in art, music, science, gym, etc. For example, a classroom teacher would bring her class to the science room at a designated time, leave the children and go off for 45 minutes. The class teacher (at P.S. 84) was entitled to five of these periods each week. This meant that a cluster might work with as many as 20 different classes during those five days. How well can any one teacher really get to know 10, 15 or 20 classes, seeing them once or possibly twice a week? What sort of rapport can be developed, especially when children are forced to do science (or anything else) at a specific time because that time is convenient to the school's scheduling? Moreover, there was frequently no continuity between what happened in the science room and what went on in the regular classroom; children knew they were being left with a "sitter" while their teacher took a break. To worsen matters, if the science teacher left the school, there could be no guarantee of replacing her with another person competent in that subject. This system, it seemed to me, was more of an administrative expedient than a particular educational approach; it was certainly alien to open education and the notion of corridor communities, both of which recognize the interdependence of subject matter (i.e. that one thing leads to another, to another, etc.).

Consequently, in an effort to make the cluster system serve the program, each cluster was assigned to four teachers, wherever that was possible, and the "specialty" designation was removed. With five coverages for each of four teachers, the weekly requirement of 20 has been met and the cluster is able to join the other four teachers as part of that community. She can familiarize herself with each of the classes, plan with them and decide her contribution as well as the manner and time of coverage. Where formerly the scheduling had to conform to some school-wide demands, now those in the corridor community have the autonomy to determine scheduling according to their needs.

There are currently six corridor communities in the school, each functioning differently--depending on how they use their resources, creativity and autonomy. On the matter of clusters and coverage, for example, there is a range of usage. In one community the cluster gives each of the four teachers 15 minutes (rather than 45) and uses the remaining 30 minutes (times four), plus

her own time, to coordinate a "corridor program." This means that for approximately two and one half hours the corridor space can be used as additional learning environment supervised by the cluster teacher. She stores a variety of selected materials in a hall closet and, each day, brings them out for use with the children of the corridor. Joint activities such as a corridor newspaper, gardening, weaving, mural painting, measurement, and movement are pre-planned by the adults so that they have meaning not only as skills in themselves but as further extension of, or starting points leading to, other explorations. A good illustration of this is the recent blossoming in the hallway of weaving, clay modeling, writing and painting related to the history and culture of the Taino Indians of Puerto Rico, all of which drew inspiration from visits to the American Museum of Natural History by some of the classes (and by their participation in a community art center affiliated with the museum) and to patterns and paper weaving done by another group. Plays and general study conducted in commemoration of Puerto Rico Discovery Day also contributed. The cluster teacher, through her participation in workshops at the art center and museum managed to stimulate the children even further.

In addition to the autonomy enjoyed in the use of cluster personnel and the development of curriculum, corridor communities can make some financial decisions as well. The school has a certain allocation from the district for books and supplies which in the past was spent by the administration based on its assessment of school needs. Now, however, after some money is taken off the top for general school needs such as paint and paper, each teacher is allotted a share of the remainder to use as he or she (or a community) sees fit. The school tries to provide up-to-date catalogues and sources of materials and to assist in ordering where requested. To supplement the short supply of money, fund raising activities are constantly being generated. Parents conduct schoolwide fairs, classes hold cake and craft sales, and the school maintains a continual effort to win support from foundations for innovative programs. On a few occasions, when I have made presentations at conferences, I had a group of parents teachers and paraprofessionals join me, and turned over the fee for it to a school corridor fund to be used, in turn, by those participants.

Major support also comes from the additional

personnel who participate in the life of a community. Parents, paraprofessionals, and student teachers are all included. Paraprofessionals, many of whom have been at the school for several years, work side by side with the teachers, rather than in a subordinate role, and are therefore in a good position to contribute as equal partners. Children often perceive them as their "other" teachers. Some are in "career ladder" college programs leading to degrees and all get regular training through the Open Corridor Advisory. (One of our recent graduates is now teaching at the school.) Student teachers from many colleges are very eager to be placed at the school because of the opportunity it affords them to train in an informal, open education setting. Like paraprofessionals, they are given responsibilities immediately and can contribute in a real life situation--everyday--rather than wait for the time when they can take over a class because their supervisor will be observing. Their presence also helps children to see the teaching internship as part of a process from study to work.

Parents, too, are seen in everyday relationships to the life of the corridor. Not only were they a force in setting the stage for open education but they are also contributors, directly and indirectly. To have curriculum focus on the child and his environment, necessarily demands that parents be a central element. Any study of history, culture, or current issues must begin, for children, with themselves and their closest relationships. Parents and other community people are frequently invited to school to share their experiences or professions so that school and life do not remain as separate, distinct entities. It is not unusual, therefore, to see a parent giving a craft demonstration to a group of children, taking children on a trip to his or her place of work, tutoring or delivering a couch to a room for the reading corner. In all, participation by all the adults in the corridor community--in fact in the school as a whole--is encouraged as an effort to mirror life rather than study about it abstractly.

As I view the growth of the various corridor communities within the school and the differences between them, it becomes clear that the extent and nature of that growth depends largely on their abilities to accept and use autonomy. There are many opportunities for autonomous growth afforded communities, like the arranging of their own programs, the ordering or selection of materials, the formation of classes, the development of curriculum,

and the formation of behavioral and pedagogical practices. It was felt that teachers should be allowed to make such educational decisions and to experiment, even if that meant occasional failure. This is, in fact, the kind of atmosphere that the teachers are trying to establish with their children.

It has taken some teachers (or groups of teachers) longer than others to be comfortable with such freedom, however. Having been part of a "top down" authoritarian structure, it is probably difficult for many of them to function in a freer, more open setting. As one now-experienced teacher said of her first year, "I knew I was supposed to do something, but I couldn't figure out what it was." Even now it is not unusual for a new teacher to say that he or she was afraid to try something in class for fear the administration would say no to it. Perhaps one lesson to be drawn from this by the administration is that from time to time they must make policy statements, or statements of philosophy. Without such input shaping the framework, an open system can become *laissez faire*. That lesson is equally well formulated on the class level where teachers frequently withhold for fear they will be imposing themselves on the children. The fact is that we are all part of the environment in a very active and lively sense. To pretend we are not by withholding our interests, opinions, or reactions is to deny reality.

Among the other problems that have arisen, I can think of two worthy of mention here. The first is that, as we have moved from an age-grade, large school orientation to a non-graded, decentralized structure, there seems to be a need developing for grade (or at least age) oriented meetings. Previously, grade meetings were held regularly to discuss ways of making the graded curriculum palatable to all. Now that curriculum is determined largely by children's interests and developmental stages, there seems to be a need to discuss what those stages are and how curriculum can be planned around that information. The second problem is that the strong focus on corridor development seems to have caused a shift away from the larger school community, causing communications to suffer. In addition, people in one corridor are sometimes not aware of what others in another corridor are up to. Also, some have tended to become too concerned with their own communities at the possible expense of others. These problems are currently being dealt with in the following ways: (1) A series of workshops have been arranged, dealing with just

such issues as child development, freedom and responsibility, and curriculum appropriate for various ages; (2) Meetings of cluster teachers have been set up to discuss and share what is happening in different corridor communities. In these and other ways, we are trying to foster a sense of the larger (school) community as we continue to support individual growth in the smaller setting.

A deeper analysis of the nature and development of corridor communities is a complex task that is currently being undertaken as part of an in-depth study of the school. Consequently, I have tried here simply to convey an impression that these units are dynamic and as different as the contributions of the people who comprise them.

Parents in the corridor

Nancy Nilson

Traditionally the parent in the school community is viewed with alarm and wariness by a large number of teachers and administrators. Indeed, many educators openly react to mothers as "the enemy." I recall my own child's nursery school teacher screaming at a group of parents who were trying to view her classroom: "Get out of here and leave *my* babies alone."

During the past six years, the Parents Association of P. S. 75, Manhattan, has attempted to alter this stereotype and establish a productive and interacting relationship between teachers, parents and administrators. We have had considerable success, we believe, although the hurdles have been many and all of the pitfalls have not been resolved. This report is by way of sharing our experiences.

Prior to 1968, P.S. 75, a racially and socio-economically mixed school located on Manhattan's liberal Upper West Side, was a typical, traditional public school. Classes were conducted behind closed doors, with curriculum geared towards raising the Metropolitan Achievement Test Scores. Instruction was based on competition, and on standard readers, texts, workbooks, with few enrichment materials or activities. The tracking system was used in child placement, leading to virtually segregated classes.

Parents played no role in the formal education of their children. They were expected to send

their children to school breakfasted and well-scrubbed and were welcome in the school only to pick up a sick child or address a behavior aberration. Participation in the school routine was limited to visiting a child's class on scheduled school visiting days or accompanying a class on an occasional field trip. Parents going on such trips found the children often ill-prepared, bored, and unruly, and the teachers "bravely bearing up" under this additional burden. The idea of a parent walking down the halls of the school and entering a classroom was unthinkable. Each classroom (for all intents and purposes) was hermetically sealed from the parents, as well as from other teachers and students. The P.S. 75 Parents Association functioned mainly around fund-raising, cultural events, helping with graduation, potluck suppers, and cookie baking. The rights of parent participation existed, but were never implemented. The idea of parent responsibility and input in the educational decisions of the school was never pushed. The parents were somewhat cowed by the administration and although they expressed their worries and concerns privately, they seemed to have no idea of how to address them systematically.

Although the school was considered one of the city's best, complaints from parents to the PA were many: "My child isn't reading" (or doing math, etc.); "my child is so bored," "the lessons are meaningless to him."

In the fall of 1968, the New York City school system was hit by a teachers strike. P.S. 75, along with other schools in the district, elected to remain open. Parents took over the administrative duties of running the school, helped in classrooms, contributed money, and "slept-in" to keep the doors open. Most important, they began to involve themselves deeply in their children's education. About half of the children and teachers attended. Weekly meetings were held between parents and teachers to discuss problems and goals. Classes became more relaxed and informal, and lessons covered a broader scope. A group of parents and teachers began to explore and research new methods of addressing the broad educational needs of children. When the strike ended, the school was quite polarized, but the group that had been active during the strike continued its investigation into changing the system in order

to offer an enriched and more personal educational experience for every child. This desire, coupled with implementation of the Balanced Class Project (which parents had fought to institute the previous year), brought them to an investigation of open education. The Balanced Class Project created heterogenous classes, and the need for new ways to teach children of a wide range of ability levels in the same classroom was obvious. After much research and many visits to other schools, it was decided that the program that best suited the needs and goals of P.S. 75 was the Open Corridor under Lillian Weber's direction. During the rest of the school year, the parents held countless meetings, showed films, had Mrs. Weber speak, and circulated a petition demanding that the Open Corridor program be brought into the school. Most important, they talked, pleaded, and fought with the school board and the administration who were most negative about the idea until, on the last day of school, permission was granted to begin the program on a small scale the following fall.

The Open Corridor began with two half-day kindergartens and one first grade. As predicted, because of parent demand, two additional first grade classes were added several weeks later. The growth of the program that has followed has always involved parent participation.

The Open Corridor Committee was formed within the PA as a parent support group to work closely with the teachers, Mrs. Weber, and the City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors. Dispensing information about the philosophy and goals of the program was its primary role, but it also helped in the restructuring of the classroom itself. Through the years, parents have been most active in bringing the comfortable sofas and chairs, rugs, lamps, and bookcases with which Corridor classrooms are now equipped. We all learned to walk the streets with an eye out for the rubbish bins and to search our own and our friends' apartments for likely discards. Parents have helped to make many of the games and materials that children use in their classrooms. They built and painted storage units, painted classrooms, and provided pots, pans, measuring utensils, tools for workbenches, typewriters--all those items never before found in classrooms. Wardrobe trunks were fitted with casters and filled with colorful costumes. Incubators, sandboxes, and indoor ponds

were built: Animals, cages and feed were donated. It is hard now to remember that an early parent victory had been to push the idea that the school's book-buying budget could be used also to purchase materials!

Committee members took on the role of buffer between individual parents and classroom teachers. Sometimes it is helpful to simply talk with someone knowledgeable about the learning process in open education. Often the committee refers a question to the advisor who then investigates, observes the child, and meets with the teacher and the parent to answer it. Many parents seemed to expect instant success, instant open education. The word most frequently heard one year was "chaos." It would have been reassuring if the advisors had said, "We have these objectives, these goals .... we are in process," but they too were learning, and they tended to be defensive and say, "This is where we *are*."

The committee distributed information by flyer, at PA meetings, and in incessant individual conversations. This is a never-ending process. As the years go by, the parent body changes. Each year many people place their children in the program without having any understanding of the basic philosophy of open education. At this point, we hear little of "chaos," but a lot about "skills." I've heard parents say, "Why doesn't my child have a phonics workbook?"; "My child is in first grade and isn't reading," and even, "Why can't I find out how my child is doing in comparison to other children in his class?" These questions seem easy to answer; however, parent information becomes more difficult as a program progresses. In the beginning, parents are variously excited, questioning, nervous, and involved. They snatch at every bit of information, attend meetings in large numbers, read the literature, and ask questions. As the program moves from an "experimental" one to becoming "established," this interest abates. Many parents no longer attend meetings or read what is sent out to them. The ongoing interpretation of classroom activities is a must to both "old" and "new" parents. The problem of communication is most difficult. At our school this year we have sent out volunteer sheets; established a Teacher-Parent Exchange Board where

teachers list their needs and parents list what they have to offer in time, goods, and talent; and conducted the first of a series of Workshops for Parents. At the workshops, the teachers and the advisor set up rooms dealing with language arts, science, social studies, art, movement, and cooking so that parents could experience the ways in which their children learn by using the materials themselves. Although the response to these efforts was not overwhelming, we feel it is the right direction to go and hope to encourage more people to participate in the future.

One danger in an Open Corridor Committee, particularly in the early years of a developing program, is that it can easily become a watchdog committee rather than a support committee. This creates suspicion and distrust between parent and teacher and can destroy the essential element of building and planning together that is so necessary. During the past three years at P.S. 75 we have tried to keep the Open Corridor Committee a support committee only, leaving all aspects of the watchdog to the PA Education Committee.

Through the years of the program, in-school parent aid has been manifold: trips, utilization of special talents and knowledge, corridor work, classroom aides when the teacher has need. Parents with media background have worked with classes in doing films and film strips, musicians have shared their talents, actors and dancers have taught in their fields. The skills of sewing, cooking, carpentry work, and teaching have been utilized. One class this year has had the help of a parent in setting up its own "Wall Street" area, where they buy insurance, buy and sell stocks, and study banking.

As the school moves further along with long-term learning projects, parents have a new way to participate. One project was developed because many of the school's parents do their weekly shopping in food cooperatives. A mini-market was set up in school where children do comparison shopping, go to the wholesale markets to buy food, and run their own co-op, aided by a number of parents.

Fund-raising traditionally was the province of the parent. In 1971 the Open Corridor Committee decided to raise funds for the program through the sale of holiday greeting cards. Although a considerable amount of money was raised, severe opposition was encountered from nonparticipating members of the parent body, who objected to raising money to benefit only one part of the school. To avoid the kind of polarization this caused, the Committee decided to do no programwide fund-raising, but to have the children in a class or community of classes organize and run their own events. Parents, of course, aid in these. We have had white elephant sales, carnivals, craft and bake sales and the like. Corridor fund-raisers typically try to capitalize on educational side-effects, such as the math used when a class bakes.

This year, the PA staged a schoolwide "Happening" which featured sale of new and used goods, an auction, games and craft events, plants, food (including the mini-market). As commercial establishments were involved, the fair created a vital link between the school and the community. Parents organized and publicized the fair with the children and the teachers; the proceeds were divided equally among all classes in the school.

As with any innovative program, visitors abound. During the five years of the Open Corridor program, P.S. 75 has had guests from over 40 states and 10 countries. In order to relieve the burden on the staff and minimize the disruption in the classrooms, the Open Corridor Committee took over the entire responsibility for organizing the visits, making appointments, and guiding guests through the school. Visiting day is Wednesday morning. Guests are offered coffee and are given information about the school and the program, and then placed in classroom groups of two or three persons for about 20 to 30 minutes, after which time they are moved to another classroom on another grade level. As much as possible, we try to see that no teacher has more than one set of guests per day. Sharing our experiences with parents and educators from other schools has been most exciting and rewarding.

The program in our school has grown from five classes in kindergarten and first grade to 26

vertically-grouped classes covering grades pre-K to 6. Since the program operates on a policy of voluntarism, this expansion is due largely to parent demand. The Corridor Committee was active through the years in trying to arouse interest in this method of teaching among the staff so that growth could be possible, while maintaining balanced classes. At first, many minority group parents were reluctant to place their children in yet another experimental class. Education and frequent one-to-one discussions, plus the obvious success of the method as it developed, helped to overcome much of the skepticism. The Committee insisted that school personnel resume all administrative duties regarding class placement because it felt that this was an improper function that had been assumed early by parents.

In 1970, having won along with other parents associations the right to participate in the selection of their principals, a parent screening committee along with representatives of the teachers nominated Luis Mercado as community principal. Mr. Mercado is committed to open education; his leadership has done much to aid the growth of the program. As the necessity of hiring new teachers arises, those trained in open education are recruited and selected. Parents now participate in the hiring of all personnel as an advisory body to the principal.

Unfortunately, the most time-consuming and unpleasant function of each member of the Open Corridor Committee has been doing battle. We have fought the school administration, the local school board, and the Central Board over many issues, including last year's conflict which threatened the loss of 12 Open Corridor teachers. We have also fought parent to parent over the philosophy of Open Corridor and the right of parents to choose the kind of education they wish for their children. In fact, we have fought for the very existence of the Open Corridor program in a variety of ways on a variety of issues over the years. It seems that no matter how far you go or how developed and successful the program becomes, there always will be internal doubts and external opposition of some sort with which to contend.

This year at P.S. 75, the Open Corridor Committee has some 30 members. We will again

address ourselves to parent information. We plan to have, with the teachers, more parent workshops and informal dialogues. We are looking into the ways and means of conducting a valid evaluation of the program.

We feel we have come a long way on the road to true parent-teacher-administrator participation and cooperation in the educational process. Our teachers and parents no longer regard each other as threats or enemies. We hope to move much farther in the direction of extending the concepts of open education between the school and the home. Later this year our school will begin an intensive multi-culture project which will deeply involve parents with the teachers and children of each ethnic group. We anticipate some redesign of our physical space in the near future. The thinking through of concepts in our Open Corridor program that this necessitates will spark another area for active parent involvement.

There may always be an institutional need for an Open Corridor Committee. But as open education is more fully realized in our school our expectation is that a "parent role" will fuse with that of all parties who nurture the learning of children.

Nancy Nilson is Co-Chairperson of the Open Corridor Committee of the Parents Association at P.S. 75, Manhattan.

Parents speak out

To find out how parents feel about the Open Corridor Program, two members of the City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors recently conducted interviews, parts of which appear below.

I. Norma Nurse queried Mrs. Karen Beech, whose son Mark, age 8, is in his second year in the Open Corridor at P.S. 145, Manhattan.

How would you summarize your attitude towards your child's classroom?
Well, when I first saw the classroom I was just dazzled by the variety of areas. It was a very small room but there were all these separate and delightful areas--a reading corner, a math corner, a block corner, and an art corner, and a sort of science middle--just all very attractively and distinctively set up places. What really impressed me even more than that was the opportunity for reading for the children--and not just the reading, but the way the classroom and therefore the child's daily life was ordered, with the little task boards--where they can attach their name tags to tasks. What I liked also was the choice that's offered, having words just everywhere. There was a lovely sense of order in a kind of delightful way for the children. They could see this order and relate to it--and it was so colorful and so bright and so alive. The classrooms are noisy to some ears, but it's very happy and purposeful noise. The kids are bustling about. You know, children at work make noise.

How do you feel about your child's progress in the Open Corridor? Do you feel any special adjustments have been made to meet his interests or needs?
Yes--I'm just very pleased. In his reading he made two years' progress and he's up to where he should be. He had to undo a bad attitude toward it. I felt the teacher understood it

very well. I had a conference with her and she said he can read but he's not reading because he just has this defeatist attitude that he can't read. But it wasn't a matter of her just sitting down and drilling and drilling and drilling him. She worked on the other end of it to overcome his lack of confidence and she gradually built up his self-confidence and then it was easy for him to just start reading. So I was very pleased that she could see through to the kernel of the problem and work on that.

Have you worked or helped in your child's classroom? How often? Did you feel welcome?
Oh yes. Very much so. Last year it was once a week--I think it was one hour a week. And the same this year. I'm working in the math area this year.

How much chance do you as a parent have to discuss ideas, purposes, and organizational problems in the classroom?
I feel that I have the right and the privilege to do that. I can't say that I've gone over there and sat down with a teacher and said, "You should do it this way," but the school itself it seems to me is very receptive to parents' ideas and suggestions. And the Open Corridor section of it even more so. I never exercised the option but I feel that they are very receptive to suggestions.

I would like to say how I've been impressed by how much more the Open Corridor requires of a teacher. I'm just so grateful that these marvelous teachers are there who give so much extra of themselves and, I'm afraid, extra of their pocketbooks too--so many of them have thought more of the children and the need of the moment than of their own purses. They come in earlier than other teachers just to get ready, and they stay later, a lot more than they have to do, going over each child's individual work. The children are at many different ability levels so they have many different books or basic readers that they're working on. The teachers know which book each child has and almost on which page each child is, so that they just have to keep a lot of information in their heads, as well as keep written records. Altogether, I think it's such a humane way to handle a class--small groups for reading, math, and so on that the teacher can directly relate to. Everyone gets the opportunity to be successful in some way, in some area.

II. Elli Ohringer-Dumont spoke with Mrs. Gabrielle Greenberg, mother of two children (Peter, 8-1/2, and Julie, 6) in the Open Corridor Program at P.S. 166, Manhattan.

Were your children ever in a formal classroom?
No, my children were never in formal classrooms, so I can't really say anything about the differences for *them*. What I do think about, though, is what will happen to the children--especially Peter, who is in third grade--when they leave the Corridor classes and go into traditional classes. He's so relaxed now. I worry if he will have trouble adjusting to sitting still, waiting for the teacher's instructions. The thing I like about the open classrooms that's different from what I've seen of traditional classes, is that there's a much greater similarity between our home life and what goes on in school. School is a natural extension of home for my children.

Have you noticed any differences in curriculum since your children first entered the Open Corridor and now?
I really haven't had too much experience with curriculum until now. I was pleased that they were learning to read and were happy in school. Only recently I got very uptight about the curriculum. I was worried that Peter was not learning enough, especially in math, because he likes math and I was afraid he would be turned away from it if he didn't learn all the things he should, and then, next year, if he couldn't do it. I got impatient--this was in about November--and I panicked! And I spoke with the teacher about it. But somehow, since then I've realized that he *is* learning skills. I often ask him leading questions, just to reassure myself that he knows some facts, and he does. So I'm more relaxed about it now. I do believe that what is important is that he is *learning to find out*, not just the facts. It's an attitude, an atmosphere. It's the methods he's learning, how to get information about something that interests him. And he enjoys the process...that's what is important to me.

Have you worked or helped in your children's classrooms? How often? Did you feel welcome?
I volunteer once a week in each class on a regular day. And I try to help out whenever I can when they need me. I feel very welcome. I think the teachers are happy to have me.

Does the teacher ask you what you would like to do and do you feel free to express what you want to do?
Yes, but I feel I must show I really *mean* it when I say I'd like to do something or I may get pulled away to do something else. The teacher feels he has to *make sure* I'm involved; maybe he thinks I'll get bored. Some parents *do* want that kind of help and suggestion from the teacher. I like to do things that I enjoy with the children. The teacher often will come by and comment on how good it is or how interesting, pointing out the learning value of what I am doing, and then will suggest a further educational possibility.

How much chance do you as a parent have to discuss ideas, purposes, and organizational problems in the classroom?
I don't see that it is my position, as a parent, to tell teachers what I think about the way they should organize their classroom. I am there to help but not to impose my ideas on them. I think it's good to get together to discuss educational ideas, if the teachers wanted to. I like to be involved in discussions about how children learn to read and other areas of the curriculum.

Thinking about all that you know about your children's classrooms how well informed do you feel that you are about what goes on there?
I don't know everything that goes on on a day-to-day basis, but I do know everything I want to know for myself. I don't want to be prying when I go to help. I am not there to observe but to help. I trust the teachers to know what to do. But I feel I am well informed when it comes to my own child's progress and what I need to know in order to be helpful.

Movement as language

Marian Brooks

The first *word* uttered by the newborn infant is a cry but the *first* sign of life is the movement of a kick inside his mother's womb. In this startling and magnificent drama these two modes of language--movement and word--are signals to the mother of a life desiring to be free. Precisely as the mother understood that first kick, so we, as teachers, must learn to understand those gestures of movement in children that first explain, demonstrate, and celebrate life at its spontaneous primary level. Movement as language offers us a closer and more intimate look at a child's needs and desires than the secondary language of words, which often fails to reveal and may even mask a child's underlying intent.

Before birth and after, the infant moves randomly, in rhythms that are necessary for life as well as those that are of his own patterning. From his first bending, stretching, and twisting he begins to develop these movements into variations that will extend his environmental space toward a more complicated perceptual space. His hands and feet move in many directions, he rolls over, he reaches out and grasps his mother's finger, a toy or his own toe. His eyes begin to focus on moving objects and he is attracted to sounds. Long before he learns to talk he has discovered simple means of communicating through sounds and movement with the people and things in his environment. As he becomes more curious about himself and his surroundings he begins to direct *his* movements towards those *other* things and people he perceives impinging upon his world.

He acquires a sitting position, finds that he can move about by crawling and pulling himself up. His inquiry grows, for now he can reach

many more things in this expanded environment. He takes joy and sensuous pleasure in the experimentation and the freedom of his movements. As Piaget has pointed out, these self-initiated activities bring him in contact with things and experiences that in turn stimulate him and modify his perception. As he assimilates these contacts, certain selected activities are repeated, and purposive inquiry, movement, and play now begin in a more conscious and deliberate way. Discovering more possibilities of the functional movements he gradually acquires balance, senses the weight of his body, and takes his first step.

His walk will become a run; he becomes aware of speed and time as he challenges his mother or others to run with him, to feel the joy, rhythm, speed and distance of his expanded activity. There will be much testing of his body competence in straightforward ways as he jumps, climbs, swings, discovering high up, down, near, and far. By the time he enters school he has not only mastered the basic functional movements but some refinements of these movements which should be providing him with a greater sense of freedom, independence of inquiry, and a developing self-confidence.

With children imagination, exploration, and spontaneous movement are naturally meshed together into a language of rhythm and feelings. A child often identifies himself with people, animals, and characters in stories he reads or has had read to him, or television programs he watches. Watching four-and five-year-olds play one day, I was presented with many facial distortions of "I'll eat you, I'll scare you, I'm funny," associated with slouching, chasing, pouncing--expanding movements of the body into big as well as intimate spaces. Playing monster came spontaneously from these children and for several days it was repeated, each time with variation and a fuller development of the theme, sometimes picking up gestures and sounds from one another, yet never congealing them into a common body language. One could observe elaborations and variations that were unique expressions for a child. It was also interesting to note that many of these children, when asked to talk about their monster play, could find but a few words to convey the same feelings expressed in their movements. For some the meaning of "monster" seemed to grow as they let it come out through their bodies; the meaning that they had

expressed outward through their movement and the rhythm of repetition seemed to come back to them as new meaning. They couldn't *see* their movements, but they knew the rhythmic play of their body and the freedom in which impulses express themselves. In playing monster, a child was representing and interpreting, as he selected things and experiences from his world to share with himself and with others. For some children the monster play seemed to liberate their confidence and joy in the expressive powers of the body; for others, however, it was so overwhelming and frightening that they retreated out of reach by the players or became apprehensive of them.

Movement, like talking, writing, painting, and other activities, is used by a child in a continuing exploration and expression of his experiences; he not only uses movement, he observes it in the world that he encounters. Here are two experiences (drawn from my work with teachers in the Open Corridor program to assist them in using movement with their children) that show how children through movement extend their learning activities.

> As I entered the Kindergarten the children were finishing their milk and cookies. Then they came and sat with me on the floor around the outer fringes of a big rug. I asked, "What is this good smell that I get when I sniff with my nose?" "Popcorn" was shouted at me, "we made popcorn, do you want some?" It was brought for me to sample. Then we talked about how they had popped it. One child showed me with her body what had happened. Immediately they were all up popping joyously over the floor space. Rather exhausted we sat down to rest and to think more about the corn popping. Did it look the same when it was popped as it did when they first put it in the pan? How did it change? The children told me that at first it was very quiet, then as they shook the pan it began to move a little bit and that "it got fatter." "Show me," I said. Some crouched on the floor, others followed their movement. They began to bounce around the

space. Suddenly there was a burst of arms, legs, and bodies moving upward and outward with a cry of "Pop." The joy of bursting kept the popping going until one little girl shouted, "That's not right, the popcorn can only pop once."

We sat down to think about her comment. A child added, "And it doesn't all pop at the same time." Another added, "And after it pops it stays quiet; it can't pop any more." We agreed. (I found out that they had talked about the experience with their teacher.) Once more some children crouched, some curled up small and then got bigger as they began to bounce around the floor. One by one they popped upward and outward, enhancing the body pop with the sound, "Pop," finally falling down to the floor. "Let's do it again, do it again!" they cried. With each repetition one could see a change in the child's pattern of movement as if he were exploring the rhythm and shape of his popping.

The second description is of a second grade group, many of Hispanic background with limited fluency in English. Since the gym was not available the teacher and I rearranged the furniture of the classroom to obtain as much floor space as possible; because the space was rather small, some of the children watched while others participated.

In the early part of the week the children had taken a trip to Central Park. A class story book illustrated with paintings and drawings told of the things and happenings they had experienced, feelings and moods they were aware of. After they had shown me their book, I asked if they could show me in movement, without using words, some of the things that had happened. They responded with the usual: people walking, children racing each other, children playing ball. As we talked about the kind of day it was, more images

> and feelings came forward in their movement: feelings of cold, people walking briskly and being bundled up against the cold. Mime and movement were combined as the children in expressing their own experiencing of the trip began to identify themselves with the people, animals, and the natural forces: "a dog chasing a paper bag"; "a squirrel hunting for a warm place to hide"; "being pushed by the wind." Imagination and reality became interwoven in the fabric of their movement. They began to say with their bodies, feelings that many had not said as candidly or as expressively with words.

Developing the skills of movement and spontaneously exploring its content often results in a more fluent, broad, and sensitive use of words in the verbal exchange among the children and in their writing. We have seen in these examples how the learning process is *opened up* by the direct appeals of body movement and further extended as a child learns to discover and use his own vocabulary of movement.

Just as the speaking vocabulary of a child is increased in learning to talk by exploring sounds and relationships of words and sharing talk with himself and others, so too can a vocabulary of movement be acquired by exploring the basic forms of movement and learning how to use movement as a language. How does the teacher help a child do this?

First the teacher can begin by giving tasks or challenges that may ask a child to show the different ways he can walk, move his arms, stretch and curl, move off the ground, etc. In these activities, a child begins to experience various ways he can move, to differentiate between the parts of his body, and how to use them. He begins to understand the potentialities of his moving body in space as he leaps high in the air, pushes his arms outward--"explodes" himself in space. This example is from a classroom experience with third graders beginning movement:

> As a contrast to active movement in linear space I asked each child to find his own space and with our bodies we explored "small, tall, fat, thin, etc." Individual children demonstrated for us; we talked about the ways he had used his body: "his arms tight against himself," "all curled up like a ball"; puffing himself out.

As a repertoire of movements is built up a child becomes aware of the *form* of his movement: the interaction of his body with space, time, and force, and the interplay of the responses. The task suggested by the teacher sets a frame but within it a child must be *free* to use his own inventiveness, to find the kind of body responses that are in harmony with his physical growth. Tasks should be selected that can stimulate a wide range of skills and exploration as a personal response from each child. He cannot discover his unique personal expression by rote, that is, by copying a movement set by the teacher. Neither can he become that balloon that he bought at the circus; but he can express *his* awareness of the characteristics of the balloon and his experiences with it: its change in shape, its floating up in and out with lightness and buoyancy, bursting in air, etc. He is discovering movement qualities, not telling a story or being a thing. If he has the bodily skills and an awareness of the potential of his own language of movement he will draw upon these in his communication. There are times of course when the teacher may suggest other alternatives or possibilities of movement. Sometimes the teacher may ask a child to observe her body movement as a possible alternative or as a "takeoff" point to help the child clarify his movement problem. The teacher's response is meant to provide feedback that will support a child's action, to extend and enrich his movement possibilities, and, in effect, to develop his own style of body language.

As a child widens his experiences, questions such as the following may help him sense what is happening: Is the movement straight or roundabout? What part of the body is leading me up from the floor? Can I make my body into different shapes, like a ball or a screw? Where is the pull of the body taking it? The teacher, in knowing what is happening in a child's movement, must have participated herself in movement in order to observe with awareness and sensi-

tivity and to be able to ask questions that will help a child extend his movement patterns.

A child selects, practices, and refines his movements through many repetitions and in this way makes his language of movement more expressive and complex. He moves from the spontaneous to more selective forms of expression that tend to clarify his images and feelings for himself and others. Older children, say, of ages eight and nine, as they become more secure in using movement to express feelings and ideas, quite spontaneously leave their own private space and begin to include another child or children as a counter mover carrying on conversation or jointly relating an experience. The following example is a case in point:

> An eight-year-old girl, at play with the class in the school play area on a warm spring day, removed herself from the group. She began skipping around through the big adjoining space, her arms swinging freely with the lift of her body. Very soon she transformed her movement; her arms arched broadly from her shoulders as her whole body took on a gliding swooping movement. She called to her friends, "See, I'm a seagull," in this way inviting four of them to join her. They glided through the space, swirled into long sensuous lines at high and low levels, revolving and swooping down and up with their bodies and arms. As their movement-play developed, I heard: "I'm catching a fish. ... Now I'm resting, throw me some bread. ... You must try to get the fish away from me ....Let's all fly together way out over the sea."

New roles were created as the dialogue and drama developed. I knew as I watched this movement-play that these children had experienced the gulls at the seashore; I could see in their movements the qualities and characteristics of the gulls, the bigness of the seashore space, and their own "feeling-thought-motion" response to this bit of their world.

The relationships of their movement were more *spatial; they danced the forces suggested by* their imagination and the spontaneity of their language-movement.

There are many opportunities for the teacher to relate movement with dramatic play, music, art, stories read and written. In a third grade class where I was working, the children had written Halloween stories. I asked them if they could express with their bodies the feelings and moods expressed in the stories.

> One particular story about a skeleton seemed to provoke some good imagery and feelings, especially when one child said, "Let's pretend the skeleton is being held up by his elbow." This gave the children a focus on what part of the body would be the leading part of their movement and how the other parts of the body would be related to it. They were held by the head, the nose, the left thumb, etc., each time trying to completely relax the body in its grotesque and loose shape. Some suggested rather difficult spatial ideas to put into movement but much real extension of movement patterns with lots of fun and laughter came out of it. They added sound effects using their voices and hands as the skeleton shook his bones.

To use experiences of the children, even the most mundane, is to see how they lend support to a child's expressive development of his own images, ideas, and feelings.

A few comments about the relationship of sound and movement. Children naturally make many kinds of voice and body sounds in their play. If the teacher is responsive to these sounds she can use them as starting points--asking the children to listen to the sounds of their feet as they run, skip, stamp. She urges them to experiment in making other sounds with hands, voice, or percussion instrument. Sound and movement become meshed when the teacher poses questions: Could your voice help the rising and falling movements, or the sharp movement that is at the high point of your leap? The rhythm and tonal elements act

as vitalizing and binding by-products of the movement. If percussion instruments have been used as "sound makers," a child may quite spontaneously select them to use with his movement. But imposing instruments, such as a drum, onto the movement before a *sensitive partnership* of sound and movement is established, often inhibits a child's individual response and may lead to a conforming activity. The following is a description of a group's experience with sound and movement:

> With the second and third grades I often began the movement with hand clapping patterns such as-..-..---with one child clapping the pattern, and the others joining in. Sometimes we used the drum to give the pattern, the group imitating or giving constrasting patterns with their hands. This is an activity that children whose home life includes a good deal of music and dance feel very secure in, especially the older ones. It is easy to move from the clapping rhythm into exploring rhythmic movement patterns with their feet and other parts of their body, each in his own individual space, then into the larger space of the area. Sometimes one of the boys, who particularly liked to play the drum, would play a rhythm, changing its tempo and mood, with the group responding as individuals in movement.

How does the school support a child's natural need and use of movement? Will the school environment, especially for the child from five to eight, confine him to small spaces, to sitting quietly and waiting for all to get ready to work, to inactive learning activities that envisage learning mainly in terms of the verbal and academic achievement of the 3 R's, and to all talk addressed only to the teacher? Or will the environment encourage children to move about as they communicate with each other, to participate in open-ended questions and learning settings that evoke a reaching out to alternatives. It is in this latter environment

that the teacher will spend less time in asking questions and more time in listening to and observing children. We know that the body movement and gestures of a child tell us more about this child than his words alone. This is not to disparage the magnificent contribution that words and the development of the intellect make in the maturing individual but to point out the danger of losing an essential candor with one's self and others through the overemphasis on the verbal, with the neglect of the primary language of movement.

No two children will use the same words to describe a feeling; neither will they use the same body movements. A child develops his self-chosen patterns of responsive movement and it is these patterns that can have great meaning for the teacher. All of us as teachers have at one time or another witnessed the candid nature of a child's movements as he plays or confronts a task before him, such as jumping up and down in anticipation of a trip. We have seen in the movement of his body and his facial expressions the nature of his individual encounter and involvement with the experiences of the classroom, his expressions of excitement, anger, interest, joy, or frustration. His movement as a language may be big and free, tight and nervous, quick or leisurely, etc. Here is a communication of feeling, of attitude, with a richness of meaning that can give the sympathetic teacher an increased understanding of how this child feels and thinks, of his expectations and intentions as he responds to the tasks and events of his living in the classroom with himself and others.

The teacher cannot know precisely what a child is thinking or feeling but he can suppose or guess at it from a child's "postural schema": his style of responding with certain gestural meanings. A child, through his body language has learned early in his life not to fear it but to trust and understand it and it is through this trust that he is able to permit the outer world to enter into his own, and to gain confidence to express his own candid world to others. A child who approaches a problem with confidence in his own ability to work at it and a genuine involvement in it brings a positive emotional tone to the setting and the task that supports his learning. Most teachers who have paid attention to the child's language of movement (gesture) and have incorporated movement in their classroom living agree that it has enabled

them to get closer to the true life of the child. It has helped to establish an openness in relationships between child and child and child and teacher that permits rich and full communication of feelings. Movement as language gives both teacher and child a sense of empathy and a deeper understanding of how we think, act and respond. One teacher expressed it:

> As I used movement as a way of helping my children to articulate their feelings and ideas and as I became more aware of each child's style of movement, I found that I was becoming more conscious of *my own* body responses to them. I realized how I too used movement and gestures as signals of my expectations, demands, and feelings. My children look forward joyously to the days when we go to the gym for movement.

Movement Books for Teachers

Rowan, Betty, LEARNING THROUGH MOVEMENT (Teachers College Press)

Gray & Percival, MUSIC, MIME AND MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN (Oxford University Press)

Canner, Norma, AND A TIME TO DANCE (Beacon Press)

Mettler, Barbara, MATERIALS of DANCE (Mettler Studios, Box 4456, University Station, Tucson, Arizona)

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Boorman, Joyce, CREATIVE DANCE IN THE FIRST THREE GRADES (David McKay)

Dimondstein, Geraldine, CHILDREN DANCE IN THE CLASSROOM (Macmillan)

Russell, Joan, CREATIVE DANCE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL (Praeger Publishers)

Jordan, Diana, CHILDREN AND MOVEMENT (Basil Blackwell, England)

Marian Brooks, former head of the Department of Elementary Education at City College, is now a member of the Workshop Center Staff.

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